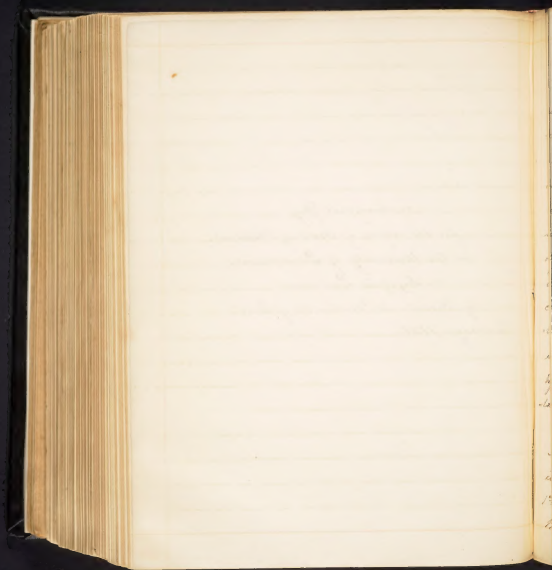


An Inaugural Oration;  
for the degree of Doctor of Medicine;  
in the University of Pennsylvania;  
on Sigillata Larynx.

by Horatio N. Heathcote of Phil<sup>a</sup>.

January - 1821.  
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### Introduction

The subject which I have chosen for an inaugural essay, is one which has been within the last half century a cause of much speculation and dispute among the medical world. Glorified soon to a proverb, has been its fortune; on the one hand its virtues were believed almost as a specific, whilst on the other its inertness has been equally maintained. When doctors disagree who shall decide; in this case - experience which has swept into the vortex of insignificance both opinions. Upon a subject like this which has been encompassed by error of luminance, to attempt originality would be vain - "toe to gills refined gold"

Is wasteful and ridiculous excess.

I therefore disclaim making any pretensions to it. I propose in this paper to give an account 1<sup>st</sup> of the Plant, 2<sup>d</sup> Mode of Exhibition, 3<sup>d</sup> Modus Operandi, & 4<sup>th</sup> Therapeutical application.

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tion; these remarks must consequently be very  
brief, as a full account of any one of the divisions  
would swell this paper to a volume incompatible  
with my object.

### Division 1.<sup>st</sup>

#### Description of the Plant.

This is the *Sigillaria Purpurea* of Linnaeus, it be-  
longs to the second order of the fourteenth class,  
in the *Sidynamia Angiospermia* of Linnaeus.

It is a native of Europe, but may be successfully  
cultivated in any part of the United States,  
whether it loses any of its virtues by cultiva-  
tion is a subject upon which much variety  
of opinion prevails; it is the opinion of Doctor  
Hamilton that it does not. This plant is a ter-  
restrial and delights in dry, gravelly, sandy soils;  
particularly upon sloping grounds. It bears  
some resemblance to the common mullein  
(*Verbascum*). It flowers from the middle of June



to the end of July; the roots, stems, leaves and flowers have a peculiar herbaceous, nauseous, and acid taste. Every part of the plant possesses similar properties, but the leaves are generally preferred and are said to be by far the more efficacious; they are slightly serrated, wrinkled, long, egg-shaped, of a green colour above, but pale underneath. Chemical composition - whey like matter; and green resin in which its narcotic properties reside. Solubility both water and alcohol extract its virtues. Incompatibility substances its solutions are precipitated by Chloride of Mercury, Nitrate of Silver, and by an infusion of yellow cinchona bark.

#### Division 2<sup>d</sup>

#### Mode of Exhibition

It may be given in substance, Tincture, Infusion, Decoction; and Extract. When we wish the effects of a narcotic to be produced the





substance will be found preferable. When the  
object is to diminish the velocity of the pulse,  
or in cases where we wish it to be gradually  
introduced into the system, the saturated tincture  
as it contains "the virtues of the Tincture"  
in a very manageable form &c. is preferred.  
When auresis is demanded Withering, Hamilton,  
and others of no less respectable authority,  
recommend the Infusion - as it admits of easy  
regulation in the dose according to the age,  
strength of the patient, and the effects produced.  
The decoction seems to have been little noticed by  
authors; the mode of preparing it is one which  
has a tendency to destroy many of its most ac-  
tive properties rendering it comparatively inert  
and causing much variability in the dose.  
Of the latter I shall only remark that a  
minim or half largest dose scarcely does  
exceed three grains can stand in need of little



conservation.

Section 3<sup>d</sup>

*Modus Operandi*

The question whether Vegetables is attendant  
or not on its primary generation, is still  
a subject of much controversy; but since  
the discovery of the long perpendicular canal  
supposed to have account for the  
vertical action of the moisture and the  
verticality of the plant, there is a possibility of  
being able to explain the verticality of the  
plant, if any man had a wider view  
inclined to write a notice on verticality  
and the recent observations a question of  
the vertical plant would present abundant  
material. It does not seem to me that  
any one has been able to take a view of  
the verticality of the plant, and the  
verticality of the plant, and the verticality of the plant.



that Vegetalis is exactly equivalent; restricting  
the meaning of the word, and incorrectly stating  
that the stimulant effects are in no way  
proportional to the ultimate sedative influence.  
The analogy in this respect between Stimulus  
and Vegetalis I think very striking. Many of the  
circumstances attending the operation of this sin-  
gular plant, can only be attributed to its in-  
terference with the nervous system, as to at-  
tempt explaining the peculiarities of it other-  
wise would be ridiculous. We are now, how-  
ever, not to come to that point until, perhaps  
quite soon, we acquire a better knowledge of the  
mechanism of the Nervous system and its influence  
over the Mental. The operation of Vegetalis on  
the Nervous system is very great as repeated  
Experiments clearly prove - diminishing the velo-  
city of the pulse in some instances to half  
the natural standard, of any man save disease.



and I regard an opinion a few years ago that could  
discover a medicine capable of reducing the pulse  
without danger from 120 in a minute to 75 or 80 at  
the will of the practitioner, he would have been  
reverenced as a physician; and he continues this  
vain quest as the means of regulating the  
pulse to our wish and of restoring a given state  
of blood as long as we judge proper. The  
state of the pulse varies also according to the  
condition of the natural body. This singularity was  
first noticed by Dr. Bidlow and published in 1811  
in the Medical and Surgical Journal, this I believe  
and he just tried upon himself, having put his  
arteries under its full effects: upon standing erect  
his pulse beat 100, upon sitting down much slower,  
and when lying on his back it fell to 40. this  
he frequently repeated upon himself and others and  
always attended with the same results. I have  
paid much attention to this subject says Doctor





Hamilton without being able to convince myself  
of the fact in question, but I believe the variation  
in the pulse will rather be found to accompany  
debility in general than to depend upon the par-  
ticular influence of Digitalis: as a proof of it, he  
relates a case in which as the patient advanced  
in strength it entirely ceased. From its ex-  
traordinary effects on the circulatory system, the  
absorbent is called into play, and upon this  
action many of its greatest medicinal effects  
depend and especially its operation as a diuretic;  
to strengthen this opinion - that Digitalis  
acts not specifically on the kidneys etc, I  
will quote the high authority of Doctor Chapman  
whose opinion upon all subjects is equally  
respected and admired - it seems says he  
to be one of those diuretics that act directly  
on the absorbent system having little or no re-  
lation to the kidneys. Concluding my remarks on



In known operations I will only add, that I think  
Regulation by diminishing the frequency of the Men-  
strua and Catarrhs; consequently diminishes the  
irregularity of the system; increases the action  
the Absorbents, and the discharge by urine.

#### Division 4<sup>th</sup>

##### Mercurial Application

Deriving a priori from the operation of Dis-  
cussives upon the Absorbents, its use in hydra-  
ric affections would seem to be indicated.  
at any rate, of all the dist. in which it has  
been employed its regulation in dropsies  
is the most disordered; The practice of per-  
sisting it in deep-seated Cases originated  
with Boerhaave; about the year 1775, he was  
induced to employ it given having seen  
it used as a domestic Remedy. & high-  
ly did Boerhaave estimate its power that  
no harm is far as the removal of the water



will contribute to cure the patient, so much  
may be expected from Digitalis. This prepa-  
ration was soon made known and imitated  
by many and among the number the dis-  
tinguished names of Linnæus, Latham and  
Garsin stood conspicuous. The indiscriminate  
administration of this remedy in dropsical regard  
to the patient's pulse, symptoms &c. has  
had a tendency greatly to diminish its  
utility. Withering says that in persons of tender  
fibre and great natural strength the medicine suc-  
ceeds, while on the contrary of the im-  
pable is intermitted, the other cold it rarely suc-  
ceeds so as soon. The encephalic form of the disease  
extra Digitalis may be prevented in all the other  
varieties. On account of the diversity of opinion it  
is difficult to determine in what form of these  
diseases Digitalis is more most efficacious; many  
practitioners have a greater inclination for it in



some one of its terms been in others; saying in doubt  
from saying the last of the same, perhaps, in  
the 1<sup>st</sup> Mr. Hamilton strongly recommended it in  
Hypothetical not without considering its be-  
nefit in the other sense, it was said as was  
said that one case against has abundant  
material but was not readily relieved by its  
existence has common sense and gallantry, & the  
the realistic statement. It is enough to feel

common to be greatly against it. The sentence  
is simple, and the other is plain. It is a sentence  
that is <sup>done</sup> ~~done~~ well, in the other

then in other cases; under circumstances spec-  
tacularly possible. The other sentence is Hamilton  
saying that it was in doubt about the be-  
nefit of the resolution in this case. In  
the Chapman I fully coincide as to the  
benefit of Vegetation. I cannot dissent my  
remarks on the third application of the





lives in droppers without exciting the flattening of  
more of Curie in its future; this medicine 'Sargol'  
may almost be said to be possessed of a charm  
for its efficacy in some kinds of droppers; espe-  
cially Hydrothorax: its introduction into medi-  
cine, is one of the greatest benefits our science  
has received in modern times. In organic affec-  
tion of the heart and lungs, where arising from  
a depending upon hydropic effusions or depo-  
sitions impeding the natural functions of  
Digestion will in doubt considerably alterate  
respiration and, prolong life. "Hypothology;"  
hemorrhage clearly indicates the advantage  
in certain states of these diseases to be derived  
from the exhibition of Bloodletting. I have expe-  
rienced to those hemorrhages from internal  
organs or what may, perhaps be more strict-  
ly designated idiopathic hemorrhages, be  
attributed to an increase of some of these excretion



is full; the pulse quick, hard, and full; but after  
effusion has taken into a considerable quantity  
of blood lost; the pulse becomes more natural  
and less frequent, the force of the circulation al-  
-though diminished; is still more rapid than  
in health, the cause being removed the vessels  
are unable to resist the vis a vivo, and a re-  
-pitation of the attack ensues; to deplete under  
such circumstances would be hazardous, at this  
critical moment vegetation is said to act like  
mages, and fortunately "Mrs. Gamellen" it is  
-some individuals are situated. The vessels  
indeed can be kept up until the vessels  
shall have regained their power of resistance.  
Of its supposed influence over different diseases;  
and of its surrounding the land, I shall say  
little; absurd and ridiculous however as this  
vacher was, it had its votaries among whom  
might be ranked Lucretia and Metastasio; the



former state, that he has employed and succeeded  
with it in cases of inflammations of the lungs, lungs  
to which he should otherwise have resorted of  
Venesection. The latter says that enormous inflam-  
mations may be overcome by it, with as much  
evidence as proof by bark can gentleness. The  
operation must have directed their better judg-  
ments or they must have resisted in these day  
patients of such idiosyncrasies as are seldom  
to be met with at the present time. In chronic  
cases of these affections after sufficient depletion  
we had been attended to. Digitalis in small doses  
as an alterative would no doubt have had a  
beneficial tendency. I shall conclude with a  
few remarks upon its application in leucorrhoea,  
as much was at one time employed in it and  
was the last stage of leucorrhoea, being given in  
large doses all its concomitant symptoms, some-  
times obstinate to its removal, towards the end.



that he has <sup>seen</sup> patients advancing towards recovery  
with so firm a pace, that he expects consump-  
tion will be cured by Foxglove, with as much  
certainty as fever by bark. Dr. Keil also states  
that he has seen many cases of confirmed ph.  
thisis cured by it, and almost all relieved; life  
has even been protracted by it, and when death  
has taken place it has been free from pain or  
struggle. When the disease is attacked in its in-  
fancy before parental expectation has taken  
place with due regulation to regimen, diet,  
exercise of constitution &c it may I think  
be administered with a prospect of almost in-  
variable success; but it has like all other  
mysterious lumina power, and when the sub-  
stance of the lungs has become involved it  
will like all other remedies prove abor-  
tive. The opinion I believe is sanctioned by most  
practitioners of the present day; I will only say





post in conclusion that emanating as the efficacy of Sigillic in the cure of Consumption flows from men of such distinction, I think it unequal as that as a drawn resource in all cases however far advanced or desperate. An appeal must now be made to the generosity of the Professors of this Institution in behalf of this imperfect Essay; and I flatter myself; when it is taken in consideration its being the production of a juvenile mind impelled by necessity and not choice: the appeal will not be made in vain.

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